Castlemaine Naturalist

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Magpies vs. Ravens

While visiting my brother Bob and his wife in Kyneton a month or two ago, I remarked on a flock of 6 Common Mynahs that were in the front garden and street. "There are about 20 that hang about here all the time," Bob said. Sure enough, a little later at least 20 of the invasive pests worked their way past the front window.

Three magpies on the lawn seemed unperturbed by the invasion.

"The Magies are always there," said Bob, "except when 2 or 3 crows come and hunt them away for a few days. I saw that happen not long ago," he went on. "After a bit of a scuffle they cleared out as usual, but not for long this time. An hour or so later they were back with about another ten or so of their mates and there was a ding-dong fight for a while. The 'crows' were put to flight and have not been seen there since."

The volunteer fighters, too, went back to their own territories, leaving the Bruton mob to enjoy again their peaceful occupation of that corner of Kyneton.

What I am still wondering is this - what sort of song and dance routine did these two or three Maggies perform to convince their compatriots of the need for prompt military action?

Stan Bruton

Mopoke Gully Excursion

10/7/99

The weather couldn't have been more perfect when Margaret Badminton led a group of 17 through the historic area along Mopoke Creek in Yapeen. We parked on a side track and went for a lovely walk along Mopoke Gully up to an area of quite severe gullying from sluicing. The weed infestation had to be seen to be believed. The talk and slides

from Greg Peters on the previous night was on all our minds as we viewed both this area and where the creek runs through Yapeen itself.

We also found a group of giant Prickly Pears in fruit. Margaret Panter tried one and said it tasted a bit like Kiwi Fruit.

We crossed the dry gully to meet up with Rita (Chris had driven her to the far end as her ankle wasn't up to the walk). She had had a wonderful time sitting on a log watching for another sighting of a Yellow-footed Antechinus which she had already seen a couple of times while she waited.

We returned to the cars feeling very depressed at the total devastation that has been done while partially removing the pines. (The erosion gully was in an old pine plantation).

We then travelled on to have a look at the butresses of an old waterwheel further along the side track. It's on private property and is quite close to an active "slate" quarry, but never-the-less seems to be quite a good spot for both plants and birds, and Penny collected quite a few different fungi to have identified by a friend.

We all enjoyed our afternoon tea before a brief stop at the top of the hill to have a look at the water race which used to supply the wheel, after which most of us headed off home via the road past the clay pits into Campbells Creek.

A big "thank-you" to Margaret for organizing the outing, and accompanying us, despite the fact she had been struck by the dreaded lurgy and was feeling quite ill, though she reckoned the rest while she waited for us, and a bit of sunshine, helped to quell the virus a little!

Maureen and Ken Dredge

BIRD LIST:

Crimson Rosella
Kookaburra
Golden Whistler
Eastern Yellow Robin
Superb Blue Wren
Brown-headed Honeyeater
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
White-eared Honeyeater
Welcome Swallow
Brown Thornbill
Tree Martin
Grey Shrike-thrush
Scarlet Robin ♀
White-winged Chough
Red Wattlebird
Grey Fantail
Common Bronzewing

Ken and Maureen Dredge

MAMMALS :

Yellow-footed Antichinus.

Rita Mills

PLANT LIST:

**Pinus sp*	Pine
Gahnia (prob. radula)	Thatch Saw-sedge
	Garden Iris
**Juncus (prob. acutus0*	Spiny Rush
J. sp.	Rush
Hypoxis sp.	Yellow Star / Tiny star
Myrsiphyllum asparagoides	Smilax Asparagus
	unidentified lilies, rosettes only
prob. Poa sp.	Tussock Grass
prob. Danthonia sp.	Wallaby Grass
**Arvena sp*	Oat
Hydrocotyle laxiflora	Stinking Pennywort
** Arctotheca calendula*	Capeweed
Cassinia arcuata	Coffee-bush, Chinese Scrub
**Hypochoreris sp.*	Cat's-ear
** Sonchis asper*	Rough Milk-thistle
	unidentified thistle
** Opunta sp. (poss. vulgaris)*	Prickly Pear
**Genista linifolia*	Flax-leaf Broom
**Fumaria sp.*	Fumitory
Gonocarpus tetragynus	Common Raspwort
Acacia dealbata	Silver Wattle
A. pycnantha	Golden Wattle
Eucalyptus leucoxylon	Yellow Gum
E. microcarpa	Grey Box
E. polyanthemos	Red Box
**Oxalis pes-caprae*	Soursob
**O. purpurea*	Large-flower Wood-sorrel
**Acetosella vulgaris*	Sheep-sorrel
**Rumex sp.*	Dock
Acena (poss. ovina)	Sheep's-burr
Lycium (Prob. ferocissimum)	African Box-thorn

Additional plants found at Champion Reef/Waterwheel

Juncus (poss. remotiflorus)	Remote-flowered Rush
Dianella revoluta	Black-anther Flax-lily
	unidentified orchid with 3 leaves
**briza maxima (dead)*	Shell Grass
Lomandra (prob filiformis)	Wattle Mat-rush
Senecio (prob. tenuofloris)	Purple-leaf Groundsel
Geranium (prob. solanderi)	Austral Cranes-bill
Acacia acinacea	Gold-dust Wattle
Eucalyptus melliodora	Yellow Box
Bursaria spinosa	Sweet Bursaria

Additional plants found at water race, Yapeen.

Prob. *Austrostipa sp.*	Spear Grass
Brachyloma Daphnoides	Daphne Heath
Astroloma humifusum	Cranberry Heath
Eucalyptus Macrorhynca	Red Stringybark
Exocarpus cupressiforis	Cherry Ballart

Margaret Panter

Understory Species for the Garden

At "Native 99" at Skydancers during May, CFNC and SGAP club member, Frances Cincotta, was one of the speakers. She is very keen on growing native species, especially indigenous species, which she finds take far less water and time, and also are best at encouraging the local native fauna, including birds.

This is her list of favourite indigenous understory species for the garden.

1. Acacia acinacea Gold Dust Wattle. 1m x 1m.
   - drought hardy
   - best flowering in full sun (Aug - Oct)
   - suckering habit (∴ suit erosion control work)
   - attracts insect-eating and seed-eating birds

2. Acacia aspera Rough Wattle. 1.5m x 2m.
   - fast growing
   - bright yellow flowers (July - Oct)
   - attracts insect-eating and seed-eating birds

3. Convolvulus eurubescens Pink Bindweed. Groundcover
   - fast growing
   - drought hardy
   - delicate foliage, pretty pink flowers (Sept - April)
   - woody taproot (can be eaten cooked)

4. Derwentia perfoliata Diggers' Speedwell 0.6m - 2m
   (formerly Parahebe perfoliata)
   - Blue flowers (spring and summer)
   - suit rockery or hanging basket
   - attracts birds
   - likes some shade

5. Einadia nutans Nodding Saltbush. Groundcover.
   (formerly Rhagodia nutans)
   - tiny red and yellow berries most of the year (edible)
   - drought hardy
   - attracts birds
   - fire retardant

6. Grevillea alpina Cats Claws. 1m x 1m
   - cream, pink, yellow, orange or red flowers (Aug - Dec)
   - attracts honeyeaters
   - best in sun. Needs well drained soil.

7. Hakea decurrens ssp. physocarpa Bushy Needlewood 2m x 1m
   (formerly included with Hakea sericea)
   - white flowers (Winter)
   - attracts honeyeaters
   - attracts seed-eaters
   - safe refuge and nesting site for finches and wrens

- dappled light to full sun

8. Hardenbergia violacea Purple Coral Pea. Groundcover or light climber
   - showy purple pea flowers (July - Nov)
   - well-drained soil
   - sun or semi-shade

9. Pelagonium rodneyanum Magenta Storksbill. Small.
   - tuberous-rooted perennial herb (Koori food - eaten cooked)
   - very showy deep pink flowers (Dec - April)
   - well drained soil
   - full sun or semi shade

10. Pultenaea pedunculata Matted Bush-pea. Groundcover.
   - Masses of yellow and red pea flowers in Spring
   - well-drained, partly shaded position
   - forms a dense mat - one plant can cover up to $3m^2$

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS Geoff Nevill and Phil Ingamells

Birds at 61 Hunter Street
May/June

Recently there has been a predominance of large birds around our area - several Little Ravens and a Pied Currawong on a daily basis - and occasional noisy battles between Long-billed Corellas and a flock of Galahs for roosting rights in the large old Sugar Gum at the rear of "Buda". (A Kookaburra box has been erected in the same tree, but remains unoccupied to date).

Naturally, the smaller birds are nervous and make very brief visits to the bird bath and feeding areas such as the Grevillea rosmarinifolia and blossoming Pepppermint. The Mistletoe Bird and Eastern Spinebills announce their presence daily with provocative calls, but the Wren family, Silvereyes and thornbills are not happy about the currawong perched silently in the Peppermint observing their activities.

A pair of juvenile Crimson Rosellas check out the area, and an occasional Red Wattlebird feeds on the gum blossom. Some leftover steamed rice placed in an elevated feeding dish attracted a large group of Silvereyes. Some waited in the nearby Peppertree while about a dozen crowded together in the dish trying to get their share. For once the bullying sparrows, completely outnumbered, were forced to gather the odd grains which fell to the ground underneath.

Shirley Parnaby.

Observations

* Maggie Oliver reported a Willie Wagtail on her garden fence, a new listing for her place.
* Maureen and Ken Dredge already had a list of 21 birds after only five days at their new block in Wesley Hill.
* Kangaroos: Chris Morris reported that about 30 Eastern Grey Kangaroos from the Poverty Gully bush are feeding behind their block in Ross Drive, Little Bendigo. A big mob of 70 + have been reported for some months from Barkers Creek, coming down on to the paddocks out of the Wattle Flat bush. They seem to be ranging for at least three of four kilometres of a night. Rita Mills.
* Four male and 2 female Flame Robins have been seen at Yapeen on the ridgetop behind Margaret Badmintons', hopping among the sandstone rocks. There are also two Richards Pippits there.
* Dora Berenyi was surprised and delighted to see seven Pelicans flying overhead in Castlemaine as she drove up Wheeler Street to her mother's house early in June.
* Margaret Badminton remarked on the large numbers of Mistletoe Birds around during July.
* Chris Morris is sure the Wood Ducks are thinking of starting to nest having had a pair crash land on his bricked-up chimney before looking for a way in -

unsuccessfully.
* Maureen Dredge has an apple in early blossom which has is attracting New Holland Honeyeaters in droves.
* Margaret Badminton has been intrigued by Yellow-rumped Thornbills stealing strips of underfelt from her garden mulch for their nesting material.

Early Spring Club Campout
Kara Kara State Park

27, 28, 29 AUGUST

CAMPING AT THE TEDDINGTON RESERVOIR CAMPING GROUND.

Don't miss this opportunity for a walking, birding and botanising bonanza in the 4000 hectare Box/Ironbark Kara-Kara State Park forest, south of St Arnaud. Just off the Sunraysia Highway, it has access from Stuart Mill, (most direct route is through Maryborough and Natte Yallock)

The CAMPSITE has toilets, water, picnic tables, fireplaces and plenty of room to park and camp, but no power or showers. We will be arriving at camp on Friday afternoon and leaving Sunday afternoon.

WHAT TO BRING? Basically you need to be self-sufficient with your own tent, food, drink, camp-gear, transport etc. Please bring your own firewood (plantation or scrap wood preferably).

SATURDAY NON-CAMPERS WELCOME - Leave 27 Doveton St. at 10 a.m.

OR "Luxury" accommodation available in Avoca or St Arnaud!

For FURTHER INFORMATION from, and REGISTRATION OF INTENTION to camp, please phone Ken and Maureen on 5470 6474 before 14/8/99.

* If anyone would prefer to travel in company meet outside 27 Doveton St. in time to leave at 10.30am on Friday 27.

ANNUAL BROOM PULL

This year the annual Broom Pull will be conducted on THURSDAY OCT. 7, starting at 9.30am. We will be aiming to clear any seedlings and generally trying to get the Cape Broom under more control - and putting Athol Dorman's Broom Puller to the test!

The meeting place will again be the corner of Mary Street and Froomes Road. Bring gloves, a drink and a snack and wear sturdy footwear and a sunhat.

After the Pull a FREE BARBECUE LUNCH will be provided.

Electronic Birding

I am fortunate enough to consult to a company with overseas connections and occasionally I need to travel. On such occasions I try to fit in a few days holiday on the end of the business timetable to acquaint myself with the local birds. In May this year I had to go to South Africa for a week and discovered that the plane schedules were such that my few days had to be extended to a week! My business was in Cape Town and I decided I would stay in the region, rather than flying North to the game parks. What to do with a week on the South Coast was my enviable problem and how to know where to go to find some good birds.

Another fortunate part of my chosen career is that I am heavily involved with computers, so my immediate reaction was to search the Internet to see what I could find. Typing in "South Africa Birds" was all I needed to do to set me on my way. I found a very good general South African Tourist site and I followed the links to the National Parks in the Western Cape Province. These were very helpful, giving details of accommodation facilities and prices together with some information on the local birds. From there I found my way to some specific birding sites, mainly specialist tour operators. Although I didn't specifically want an organised tour, I ventured into one site – a tour operator based in Cape Town. It looked friendly enough, so I contacted them via email.

Almost immediately I received a very helpful response which suggested that I use a birding guide for a day in Cape Town before venturing further afield. He offered to arrange this for me and find accommodation for me locally. I accepted the offers and arranged to meet him one night during my business week. All this without leaving my desk!

I had a South African field guide, so I set about some serious study of the species I was likely to find on the trip. Some very different families to anything we have in Australia. So I set out on the trip a little apprehensively but feeling that I had done my homework.

As is usually the case in such circumstances, everything fell in to place as if by magic. Patrick, the tour operator met me as planned and enthusiastically helped me plan my itinerary and introduced me to Callan, my local guide. On the guiding day, we met before dawn and finished after sunset. I had listed nearly 100 new birds and more importantly felt much more confident with the identification of the commoner species – this paid handsome dividends for me later in the week.

The week on my own was spent largely in National Parks with very comfortable self contained accommodation, with one night of luxury in an eco reserve near Knysna. My eventual bird list was around 140 species positively identified and many more maybes – but they can wait for another time! I have been in electronic contact with my newly found friends in South Africa to thank them and let them know what I managed to find.

I can thoroughly recommend the Internet as a source of good information for such trips if you are fortunate enough to have such opportunities. I would also be happy to help anyone who might be interested to surf the net for similar information, but doesn't have the equipment or confidence to do so.

Nigel Harland

C.F.N.C. PROGRAMME

General Meetings are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) hall, at 8.00 pm on the second Friday of each month, except January. Entrances to the car parks are beside the Art Gallery and beside the Church building in Lyttleton Street.

Excursions leave promptly at times stated, usually on the Saturday after the general meeting. There are NO excursions on TOTAL FIRE BAN days.

Business Meetings are held at 38 Campbell Street on the 4th Thursday of each month, except December, at 7.30pm. All members are invited to attend.

VISITORS ALWAYS WELCOME TO CLUB MEETINGS AND EXCURSIONS

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Fri. Aug. 13 **The Overland Track Relived** An evening of slides, photos and narrative with the walkers. UCA hall, 8pm

Sat. Aug 14 **Long Swamp** Joint excursion with Maryborough FNC. Leave CHIRP, 13 Mostyn St. at 1.30pm sharp, or meet at the culvert on the west end of the swamp on the Clunes Road at 2pm. Take binocs, afternoon tea, etc.

Spring Wednesday walks begin on Wed Sept 1 and continue each Wed. until Oct. 20. Meet at 27 Doveton St at 4 pm. There will always be transport available, so, if you don't have a car just turn up anyway. Walks last approx 1 hour. We should be back in town by 5.30 each time. Leader for Sept 1, R. Mills; Sept 8, M. Dredge.

Fri. 27 - Sun 29 Aug. **Club Spring Campout at Kara Kara.** Non-campers are invited to join in on Sat. 28. Information p6

Sun. Sept 5 **Fryerstown area** joint excursion with Ballarat FNC. Leader Norma Dickerson. Leave 27 Doveton St. at 10am, or meet at the Big Red Gum at Guildford at 10.15. Take lunch, afternoon tea.

Fri. Sept. 10. **Microscopy.**, Peter Sansom and Ern Perkins. UCA hall. 8pm

Sat. Sept 11 **Terrick Terrick.** All day excursion. Leave 27 Doveton St at 9.30 am. Take lunch, etc. Don't forget the binocs!

Wed. - Sun., Sept 15 - 19. **VFNCA Campout at Mildura.**
Full information is now available. If interested ring Rita Mills on 5472 4553. It will also be available at the August meeting.

October Arts Expo The Club will be leading walks in the Box/Ironbark forests on Oct 3, 10 (with Doug Ralph) and 17, leaving the Tourist Information Centre opposite Castle Motel at 1.30pm. Finish about 4pm. Bring afternoon tea.

Thurs, Oct 7 **Annual Broom Pull** Butterfly area of the Botanic Gardens. Details p6

Fri. Oct. 8 **Birds and Words from History and Literature** Speaker is Peter Allan of Rochester. UCA hall, 8pm

Sat. Oct. 9 **Kamarooka Forest.** Peter Allan will lead to a good place for bird nests in the forest. All day outing. We will be combining with Echuca BOC, meeting with them at 10.30am. Watch for details at a later date.

Fri. Nov. 12 **African Parks** John Turnbull. UCA hall, 8pm.

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Committee; M. Dredge (President) Ph 5470 6474, E. Perkins (V.P. and Grievance Officer), B. Maund (Sec.)Ph 5472 4354, M. Badminton (Treas.), R. Mills (N/L Ed. and P.O.), G. Broadway, J. Turnbull, M. Oliver, C. Morris, K. Turner, Z. Thomas.

Subscriptions - Ordinary membership: Single $22, Family $30
Pensioner/student: Single $18, Family $24. Supporting : $31

The Subscription now covers postage of the 'Castlemaine Naturalist'.

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